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ORGANIZATION OF A PUPIL PERSONNEL COUNCIL IN A SHARED SERVICES PROJECT.

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE RATIONALE AND BASIC PROCEDURES OF ORGANIZING A PUPIL PERSONNEL COUNCIL ARE PRESENTED. THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE COMPOSED OF PUPIL PERSONNEL WORKERS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM. CASE CONFERENCES, CONSULTATION WITH ADMINISTRATORS, AND PROCEDURAL DECISIONS ARE AMONG THE POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES OF SUCH A COUNCIL. (NS)

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By

Robert E. Flanders and Willathea G. Jackson

INTRODUCTION

Realizing that many Georgia counties are unable to provide all needed specialized educational services, the State Board of Education made additional money available to help finance experimental projects on a shared basis to groups of cooperating school systems. These services are available through service units which are being jointly financed by the State Department of Education and the participating school systems.

The first "shared services project" established in the state is the Educational Services Unit located in the Griffin area. The unit serves six county school districts and one independent school district having a total of 49 schools units, serving 25,000 students and employing 1050 teachers. During the 1966-67 school year, which was the initial year, consultative services were available in the areas of administration, mathematics, science, reading, foreign languages, language arts, social studies and art.

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When plans were formulated for the 1967-68 school year, the board of directors saw a need for expanding the services to include a consultant for pupil personnel services. During this school year, the consultant has been working with visiting teachers, counselors, and special education teachers and coordinators. In addition, limited psychological services have also been made available to students in these school systems.

In the process of organizing the consultative services for seven school systems, it became apparent that the coordinative function of such a consultant should be emphasized to the extent that all people concerned with pupil personnel work in each county should organize into a county pupil personnel services council in an effort to enhance the services which they can make available to the students in their systems.

After the consultant had aided two of the systems in implementing a system-wide pupil personnel council, personnel in other systems have shown interest in a similar organization. The consultant saw the need of preparing a brochure which could be utilized by each county in implementing its council.

The prime objective of this paper is to present a description of the rationale and basic procedures of organizing such a council. More specifically, the material is organized in six basic divisions as follows: (1) Definition, (2) Composition, (3) Goals, (4) Mechanics, (5) Benefits, and (6) Evaluation.

A PUPIL PERSONNEL COUNCIL

Definition

A systemwide pupil personnel services council should be composed of those members of the school staff who deal primarily with the individualization of pupil services. In its broadest connotation, pupil personnel services deal with everything affecting the student in the school situation.

Pupil personnel services workers should function as a team in an effort to meet the psychological, physiological, educational, and general growth and developmental needs of youth. The team approach should involve a close relationship between school counselors, visiting teachers, school psychological services workers, school nurses, health service workers, speech and hearing therapists, and other special education specialists. Members of the team should work closely with curriculum directors, administrators, and classroom teachers in order to assist in providing students with the best possible learning situtation. Pupil personnel workers offer supportive assistance to teachers and aid students in the appraisal of individual potentialities and needs. In addition, they help students in evaluating their social and educational progress.

In summary, the purpose of the Pupil Personnel Council is to offer cooperative assistance in all phases of the

educational program. In addition, the contribution each member makes from his own discipline increases the total value of services which can be rendered in a team approach.

Composition

The Pupil Personnel Services Council should be composed of the people in a school system who function basically in a consultative capacity to the instructional staff. More specifically, these include:

Visiting Teachers

Curriculum Directors *

Elementary Counselors

Secondary Counselors

School Psychologists

Psychometricians

Health Service Workers (School Nurses)

Speech and Hearing Therapists

Other Special Education Specialists

Other professional services personnel from the community should be considered as resource persons and should

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* In larger school districts, the curriculum director will generally serve only in an ex officio capacity; however, since the Educational Services Unit serves a group of predominately rural systems, the curriculum director is included as a member of the Council because in these counties she is vitally involved with coordination of the pupil personnel services program due to the lack of sufficient county personnel to assume these responsibilities.

be consulted regularly, or on occasion as the Council sees need. Suggested persons may include:

Public Health Nurse

Psychiatric Nurse

County Social Worker (F&CS)

Child Welfare Worker

Goals

The purpose of the Pupil Personnel Council is to broaden the sphere of influence of the workers through cooperative activity and, by so doing, to improve the services to the students and teachers in the area.

Of great importance, and a service often needed, is the performance of a leadership role in small rural-urban school systems. Many ideas arise in the minds of leadership personnel concerning the improvement of the educational program, but these ideas often wither and die because of lack of impetus as well as the lack of professional personnel to encourage them to fruition. Members of the Council serve as consultants to the superintendent in matters of pupil personnel policies, to the curriculum director in matters of curriculum, and to the teachers and principals in matters relating to pupil needs.

By means of case conferences, in which the personnel who are working with a child with problems get together and pool their information, new insight into common problems can

be gained and the benefits of their contacts with the child and his family can be shared with others who are equally interested in the case.

By setting up a procedure of handling pupil personnel problems on a communal basis, aid accrues to the school administration through more understanding service and more efficient use of personnel. It is hoped that regular procedures will lead to services to the individual students, teachers, and administrators which will serve, not only a crisis-oriented situation, but will have preventive implications as well.

Mechanics

It is suggested that the Pupil Personnel Council be set up in the following manner:

1. A planning session should be arranged with the consent of the superintendent of the system by someone willing to take the initial responsibility. In case the area is served by a consultant of Pupil Personnel Services, this person should initiate the action, unless it has already been done by another pupil personnel worker in the system. In the event there is no person functioning in such a capacity, the county visiting teacher, curriculum director, or an intersted counselor could assume the responsibility for initiating action.

2. After the time and location of the meeting have been set up and cleared with the administration, a letter of explanation should be sent out listing briefly: (a) the purposes of the organization, (b) those invited to attend, and (c) the agenda for the meeting. It should be stated that during the meeting consideration will be given to the advantages of such an organization to the local educational program. In an effort to bolster the organization, the leader should be committed to the usefulness of such organization and have rather definite local aims in mind. The meeting time should be set up in advance and the first organizational meeting limited to an hour. If time does not permit all business to be taken up, it should be tabled until the next meeting. This provides impetus for scheduling the next meeting, as well as showing understanding for the schedules of the personnel in attendance.

Benefits

Benefits to the individual pupil personnel services workers, to the students, and to the system will be contingent upon the time, effort, and interest put into the group. Some suggested accomplishments are these:

1. Pupil personnel services workers will be given

opportunities for growth in skills through in-service training.

a. The utilization of resource persons, as consultants to the group, will broaden each individual's field of knowledge. In addition, the contribution of each group member will aid in the understanding of the roles of other members.

b. The exchange of information and the acceptance of common responsibility for students who need help may, by involving those charged with the inevitable follow-up, lead to better understanding and cooperation in processes effecting behavior changes in students.

c. The re-examination of attitudes towards pupils is often encouraged, leading to a decrease in the tendency to attach labels to these pupils and instead to deal with them as individuals rather than categorizing them.in groups. In addition, the council could serve as a seminar for the participants in child growth and development.

2. Students in the system could be helped in these suggested ways:

   a. In a system which is cooperatively working for the good of the students, there should be uniformity of functions. Investigations should be made as to the advisability of a uniform testing program, for example, or to the continuity of pupil services from one grade level school to another in an effort to encourage uniform evaluation and upgrading of all schools within the area.

   b. In order to help overcome educational deprivation, more intensive diagnostic attention should be given to individual children. Diagnostic attention could result in vastly improved productivity on the part of pupils as well as greater satisfaction on the part of faculty members. Every program for alleviating educational deficiencies must be provided personnel who have the time, ability, and incentive to apply diagnostic attention in the learning process. In addition, the intervention must be individualized and personal.

3. The system would benefit in these suggested areas:

   a. Time and thought could be allocated to

defining needs and stressing planning for solutions of needs which, often in the press of normal operations and crisis-situations, have to be postponed. The use of a uniform self-evaluation encouraged by the council could bring these strengths and weaknesses to the forefront in an effort to pinpoint the need for additional pupil personnel workers.

b. A common ground could be provided for an exchange of information and acceptance of common responsibility for all children in the system who need help. This would be a strength to systems in which there is a great amount of transfer from one school to another.

c. Available community resources could be spotted, and used by the groups. Two-way communication between the schools and the community resources can be improved in the continuing public-relations endeavors of the school.

d. The council can be of primary importance to the system as an aid to curriculum development. Individual differences among

the child in any group are of significance to the curriculum planner and must be considered, if the most effective curriculum changes are to be achieved. Consideration of the self-concept of the individual child is an integral part of adequate curriculum building or modification. The council should aid in the periodic re-evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum in the light of meeting the needs of children.

Evaluation

Unless a useful purpose is served by the organization of a group such as a pupil personnel council, time may be more wisely spent at other functions. In the preceding pages, effort has been made to state, directly and through implication, the worth of such an endeavor.

In summary, remember these are generalizations. Specifics must be established for each county as its individual needs, resources, and philosophy dictate. The council could provide:

1. Uniform self-evaluation of the system in defining needs and stressing planning for solutions.
2. Assessment of the role and function of each pupil personnel worker in the light of what he does in the system.
3. Discussion of common role-difficulties and strengths with consequent better understanding of

them.

4. Assistance in the planning of curriculum to take into account:
   a. individual differences of pupils and their needs.
   b. adequacy of curriculum for student population.
   c. differences of philospphy and objectives.
   d. learning difficulties.
   e. handicaps of children.
   f. psychological climate of school situation.
5. Delineation of need for such special services as classes for the educable mentally retarded, the trainable mentally retarded, handicapped children, speech and hearing therapists, classes for the accelerated child, and increased emphasis on vocational and technical subjects.
6. Leadership and consultation services to administrators and teachers in matters such as outlined above.
7. Liason for referral sources needed in the school and encouragement of cooperation of system personnel with the personnel of the Family and Children's Services, Health Department, Mental Health Clinics, State Department of Education, and any other available resources.

8. Concrete, documented evidence of need for above that can be used by the system not only in improving the system, but also for dissemination to other interested groups. Such concrete evidence, for example, can be used by the board of education in determining the need for EMR classes, by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in assigning funds for the educationally disadvantaged, and by the school in increasing its holding power in the community.

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